

## Testimony of Liz Dupont-Diehl

Associate Director of the Connecticut Citizen Action Group (CCAG)

March 9, 2023

**SB 1177 AN ACT CONCERNING ONE FAIR WAGE - Support**

**HB 6859 AN ACT CONCERNING PREDICTABLE SCHEDULING - Support**

**SB 1178 AN ACT EXPANDING CONNECTICUT PAID SICK DAYS - Support**

**SB 1180 AN ACT CONCERNING RIDESHARE AND DELIVERY DRIVER MINIMUM STANDARDS - Support**

Good afternoon Senator Kushner and Representative Sanchez, and other members of the Committee, my name is Liz Dupont-Diehl and I am the Associate Director of the Connecticut Citizen Action Group (CCAG).

CCAG testifies today in support of SB 1177 AN ACT CONCERNING ONE FAIR WAGE, HB 6859 AN ACT CONCERNING PREDICTABLE SCHEDULING, SB 1178 AN ACT EXPANDING CONNECTICUT PAID SICK DAYS, and SB 1180 AN ACT CONCERNING RIDESHARE AND DELIVERY DRIVER MINIMUM STANDARDS. CCAG is a member of the Recovery for All coalition and we speak in solidarity with other RFA partners testifying here today.

CCAG and our thousands of members are strongly in favor of all of these bills, which together will go a long way to establish fairness and respect for Connecticut working people. Hundreds of thousands of working people are struggling to raise families, **while a handful of wealthy corporations and wealthy residents are getting even wealthier.** Adding insult to injury, working people in Connecticut are also contributing a greater share of their income in taxes while the wealthiest fail to pay what they owe to state and local governments.

This isn't an accident. Decades of bad policy choices have made Connecticut ground zero for the most extreme racial, economic, and gender inequities in the country.

First I'll address SB 1177, SB 1177 An Act Concerning One Fair Wage. The subminimum wage now affects a workforce of nearly 70,000 tipped workers in Connecticut – 70% of whom are women and 36% are people of color. SB 1177 eliminates the subminimum wage, forcing employers to pay tipped workers the full minimum wage and allow them to continue earning tips.

Connecticut's minimum wage is \$14 per hour. It will go up to \$15 per hour June 1, 2023. The subminimum wage for tipped workers is \$6.38. When the minimum wage goes up, the subminimum wage is set to remain at \$6.38.

SB 1177 corrects an injustice whose roots date back to after Emancipation, when the restaurant industry sought to hire newly freed Black people without paying them, forcing them to live on tips. This concept was made law, excluding a workforce of mostly Black women from the full minimum wage. Today, Connecticut remains one of 43 states that permits this business model built on slavery and has allowed a workforce that is overwhelmingly women and disproportionately women of color to continue receiving a subminimum wage 150 years since Emancipation.

Servers directed to perform non-service duties that do not generate tips, e.g., cleaning bathrooms, sweeping floors, prepping food, etc., must be paid the full minimum wage for that work. Connecticut Department of Labor regulations require employers to keep accurate records to ensure workers are paid properly. If the employer is ever in doubt about which rate to pay, they are required to pay the full minimum wage. When employers don't follow the rules and cheat workers it is considered wage theft. Please correct this legalized wage theft with SB 1177.

Additionally, HB 6859 AN ACT CONCERNING PREDICTABLE SCHEDULING, SB 1178 AN ACT EXPANDING CONNECTICUT PAID SICK DAYS, and SB 1180 AN ACT CONCERNING RIDESHARE AND DELIVERY DRIVER MINIMUM STANDARDS are also critically important in establishing a manageable and safe work environment for hardworking people. How can we be surprised when our educational outcomes are not what they could be, and when our economy falters. Too many families are struggling to afford the rising costs of healthcare, food and housing - adding unpredictable work schedules and inability to care for themselves and their children are further stressors and should not be sanctioned by us. As stated earlier, and reinforced by other Recovery for All members, Connecticut is very nearly the most unequal state in the nation, with working people paying a higher percentage of their incomes in taxes – the result of decades of bad policy choices. We can and we must do better. CCAG and our members urge you to pass all of these laws and make an immediate and positive difference for thousands of your constituents.

Thank you for your consideration.

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